

## Section 5. Special VFR (SVFR)

### 7-5-1. AUTHORIZATION

a. SVFR operations in weather conditions less than basic VFR minima are authorized:

#### REFERENCE-

FAAO 7110.65, Operational Priority, Para 2-1-4.

1. At any location not prohibited by 14 CFR Part 91, Appendix D or when an exemption to 14 CFR Part 91 has been granted and an associated LOA established. 14 CFR Part 91 does not prohibit SVFR helicopter operations.

2. Only within the lateral boundaries of Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface areas, below 10,000 feet MSL.

3. Only when requested by the pilot.

4. On the basis of weather conditions reported at the airport of intended landing/departure.

#### REFERENCE-

FAAO 7110.65, Climb to VFR, Para 7-5-6.

FAAO 7110.65, Ground Visibility Below One Mile, Para 7-5-7.

5. When weather conditions are not reported at the airport of intended landing/departure and the pilot advises that VFR cannot be maintained and requests SVFR.

#### PHRASEOLOGY-

**CLEARED TO ENTER/OUT OF/THROUGH, (name) SURFACE AREA**

*and if required,*

*(direction) OF (name) AIRPORT (specified routing),  
and*

**MAINTAIN SPECIAL V-F-R CONDITIONS,**

*and if required,*

**AT OR BELOW (altitude below 10,000 feet MSL)**

*or as applicable under an exemption from 14 CFR Part 91,*

**CLEARED FOR (coded arrival or departure procedure) ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE, (additional instructions as required).**

#### REFERENCE-

FAAO 7110.65, Airspace Classes, 2-4-22.

b. SVFR operations may be authorized for aircraft operating in or transiting a Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface area when the primary airport is reporting VFR but the pilot advises that basic VFR cannot be maintained.

#### NOTE-

*The basic requirements for issuance of a SVFR clearance in subpara a apply with the obvious exception that weather conditions at the controlling airport are not required to be less than basic VFR minima.*

### 7-5-2. PRIORITY

a. SVFR flights may be approved only if arriving and departing IFR aircraft are not delayed.

#### EXAMPLE-

1. A SVFR aircraft has been cleared to enter a Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface area and subsequently an IFR aircraft is ready to depart or is in position to begin an approach. Less overall delay might accrue to the IFR aircraft if the SVFR aircraft is allowed to proceed to the airport and land, rather than leave, a Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface area or be repositioned to provide IFR priority.

2. A SVFR aircraft is number one for takeoff and located in such a position that the number two aircraft, an IFR flight, cannot taxi past to gain access to the runway. Less overall delay might accrue to the IFR aircraft by releasing the SVFR departure rather than by having the aircraft taxi down the runway to a turnoff point so the IFR aircraft could be released first.

#### NOTE-

*The priority afforded IFR aircraft over SVFR aircraft is not intended to be so rigidly applied that inefficient use of airspace results. The controller has the prerogative of permitting completion of a SVFR operation already in progress when an IFR aircraft becomes a factor if better overall efficiency will result.*

b. Inform an aircraft of the anticipated delay when a SVFR clearance cannot be granted because of IFR traffic. Do not issue an EFC or expected departure time.

#### PHRASEOLOGY-

**EXPECT (number) MINUTES DELAY, (additional instructions as necessary).**

#### REFERENCE-

FAAO 7110.65, Operational Priority, Para 2-1-4.

FAAO 7110.65, Application, Para 5-6-1.

**7-5-3. SEPARATION**

a. Apply approved separation between:

1. SVFR aircraft.
2. SVFR aircraft and IFR aircraft.

**NOTE-**

*Approved separation between SVFR fixed-wing aircraft, and between SVFR fixed-wing aircraft and IFR fixed-wing aircraft, is prescribed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, para 7-5-4, Altitude Assignment. Radar vectors are authorized as prescribed in para 5-6-1, Application, subpara f.*

b. Alternate SVFR helicopter separation minima may be established when warranted by the volume and/or complexity of local helicopter operations. Alternate SVFR helicopter separation minima shall be established with an LOA with the helicopter operator which shall specify, as a minimum, that SVFR helicopters are to maintain visual reference to the surface and adhere to the following aircraft separation minima:

1. Between a SVFR helicopter and an arriving or departing IFR aircraft:

(a)  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. If the IFR aircraft is less than 1 mile from the landing airport.

(b) 1 mile. If the IFR aircraft is 1 mile or more from the airport.

2. 1 mile between SVFR helicopters. This separation may be reduced to 200 feet if:

(a) Both helicopters are departing simultaneously on courses that diverge by at least 30 degrees and:

(1) The tower can determine this separation by reference to surface markings; or

(2) One of the departing helicopters is instructed to remain at least 200 feet from the other.

**NOTE-**

*Radar vectors are authorized as prescribed in para 5-6-1, Application.*

**REFERENCE-**

*FAAO 7110.65, Operational Priority, Para 2-1-4.*

**7-5-4. ALTITUDE ASSIGNMENT**

Do not assign a fixed altitude when applying vertical separation, but clear the SVFR aircraft at or below an altitude which is at least 500 feet below any conflicting IFR traffic but not below the MSA prescribed in 14 CFR Section 91.119.

**PHRASEOLOGY-**

**MAINTAIN SPECIAL V-F-R CONDITIONS AT OR BELOW (altitude).**

**NOTE-**

1. *SVFR aircraft are not assigned fixed altitudes to maintain because of the clearance from clouds requirement.*

2. *The MSA's are:*

(a) *Over congested areas, an altitude at least 1,000 feet above the highest obstacle, and*

(b) *Over other than congested areas, an altitude at least 500 feet above the surface.*

(c) *Helicopters may be operated at less than the minimum altitudes prescribed in (a) and (b) above.*

**REFERENCE-**

*FAAO 7110.65, Operational Priority, Para 2-1-4.*

*FAAO 7110.65, Application, Para 5-6-1.*

*14 CFR Section 91.119, Minimum Safe Altitudes: General.*

**7-5-5. LOCAL OPERATIONS**

a. Authorize local SVFR operations for a specified period (series of landings and takeoffs, etc.) upon request if the aircraft can be recalled when traffic or weather conditions require. Where warranted, LOA's may be consummated.

**PHRASEOLOGY-**

**LOCAL SPECIAL V-F-R OPERATIONS IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF (name) AIRPORT ARE AUTHORIZED UNTIL (time). MAINTAIN SPECIAL V-F-R CONDITIONS.**

**REFERENCE-**

*FAAO 7210.3, Appropriate Subjects, Para 4-3-2.*

b. Control facilities may also authorize an FSS to transmit SVFR clearances so that only one aircraft at a time operates in the Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface areas unless pilots agree that they will maintain visual separation with other aircraft operating in the Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface areas. Such authorization concerning visual separation by pilots shall be contained in a LOA between the control facility and the FSS.

**REFERENCE-**

*FAAO 7210.3, Developing LOA, Para 4-3-3.*

*FAAO 7110.65, Operational Priority, Para 2-1-4.*

**7-5-6. CLIMB TO VFR**

Authorize an aircraft to climb to VFR upon request if the only weather limitation is restricted visibility.

**PHRASEOLOGY-**

**CLIMB TO V-F-R WITHIN (name) SURFACE AREA/ WITHIN (a specified distance) MILES FROM (airport name) AIRPORT, MAINTAIN SPECIAL V-F-R CONDITIONS UNTIL REACHING V-F-R.**

**REFERENCE-**

*FAAO 7110.65, Operational Priority, Para 2-1-4.*

*FAAO 7110.65, Airspace Classes, Para 2-4-22.*

*FAAO 7110.65, Authorization, Para 7-5-1.*

**7-5-7. GROUND VISIBILITY BELOW ONE MILE**

14 CFR Part 91 does not prohibit helicopter SVFR flight when the visibility is less than 1 mile. Treat requests for SVFR fixed wing operations as follows when the ground visibility is officially reported at an airport as less than 1 mile:

a. Inform departing aircraft that ground visibility is less than 1 mile and that a clearance cannot be issued.

b. Inform arriving aircraft, operating outside of a Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface area, that ground visibility is less than 1 mile and that, unless an emergency exists, a clearance cannot be issued.

c. Inform arriving aircraft, operating VFR/SVFR within a Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface area, that ground visibility is less than 1 mile and request the pilot to advise intentions.

**PHRASEOLOGY-**

(Name of airport) **VISIBILITY LESS THAN ONE MILE. ADVISE INTENTIONS.**

**NOTE-**

Clear an aircraft to land at an airport with an operating control tower, traffic permitting, if the pilot reports the airport in sight. The pilot is responsible to continue to the airport or exit the surface area. 14 CFR Section 91.157 prohibits VFR aircraft (other than helicopters) from landing at any airport within a surface area when ground visibility is less than 1 mile. A pilot could inadvertently encounter conditions that are below SVFR minimums after entering a surface area due to rapidly changing weather. The pilot is best suited to determine the action to be taken since pilots operating under SVFR between sunrise and sunset are not required to be instrument rated, and the possibility exists that flight visibility may not be the same as ground visibility. 14 CFR Section 91.3 authorizes a pilot encountering an inflight emergency requiring immediate action to deviate from any rule of 14 CFR Part 91 to the extent required to meet that emergency. Flight into adverse weather conditions may require the pilot to execute the emergency authority granted in 14 CFR Section 91.3 and continue inbound to land.

d. Authorize scheduled air carrier aircraft in the U.S. to conduct operations if ground visibility is not less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  statute mile.

**NOTE-**

14 CFR Part 121 permits landing or takeoff by domestic scheduled air carriers where a local surface restriction to visibility is not less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  statute mile, provided all turns after takeoff or before landing and all flights beyond 1 statute mile from the airport boundary can be accomplished above or outside the area so restricted. The pilot is solely responsible for determining if the nature of the visibility

restriction will permit compliance with the provisions of 14 CFR Part 121.

e. Clear an aircraft to fly through the Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface area if the aircraft reports flight visibility is at least 1 statute mile.

**REFERENCE-**

FAAO 7110.65, Operational Priority, Para 2-1-4.

FAAO 7110.65, Authorization, Para 7-5-1.

**7-5-8. FLIGHT VISIBILITY BELOW ONE MILE**

Treat requests for SVFR fixed-wing operations as follows when weather conditions are not reported at an airport and the pilot advises the flight visibility is less than 1 mile:

**NOTE-**

14 CFR Part 91 prescribes the visibility for basic VFR and SVFR operations as the official reported ground visibility at airports where provided and landing or takeoff "flight visibility" where there is no official reported ground visibility.

a. Inform departing aircraft that a clearance cannot be issued.

b. Inform arriving aircraft operating outside of a Class B, Class C, Class D or Class E surface area that a clearance cannot be issued unless an emergency exists.

c. Request the intentions of an arriving aircraft operating within a Class B, Class C, Class D, or Class E surface area.

**NOTE-**

Clear an aircraft to land at an airport with an operating control tower, traffic permitting, if the pilot reports the airport in sight. The pilot is responsible to continue to the airport or exit the surface area. 14 CFR Section 91.157 prohibits VFR aircraft (other than helicopters) from landing at any airport within a surface area when flight visibility is less than 1 mile. A pilot could inadvertently encounter conditions that are below SVFR minimums after entering a surface area due to rapidly changing weather. The pilot is best suited to determine the action to be taken since pilots operating under SVFR between sunrise and sunset are not required to be instrument rated, and the possibility exists that flight visibility may not be the same as ground visibility. 14 CFR Section 91.3 authorizes a pilot encountering an inflight emergency requiring immediate action to deviate from any rule of 14 CFR Part 91 to the extent required to meet that emergency. Flight into adverse weather conditions may require the pilot to execute the emergency authority granted in 14 CFR Section 91.3 and continue inbound to land.

**REFERENCE-**

FAAO 7110.65, Operational Priority, Para 2-1-4.